

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

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REP. MARKEY SEEKS INVESTIGATION OF FORMER FBI OFFICIAL'S CLAIM THAT TERRORISTS ARE EXPLOITING IDENTITY FRAUD

Markey: Rise In ID Theft Could Have 'Grave National Security Consequences'

WASHINGTON, DC – Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and Co-Chairman of the Bi-Partisan Congressional Privacy Caucus, today sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff and Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Robert S. Mueller to seek information on whether terrorists are using stolen personal information such as credit card records to fund or plan terrorist activities. Dennis Lormel, the former chief of the FBI's terrorist financial review group, previously identified the connection between data breaches, identity fraud and terrorism stating, "I don't think people have really gotten the message. We have known terrorists out there who are exploiting identity theft and identity fraud vulnerabilities."

"Pilfered private information has become a plague for millions of consumers who have been blindsided by credit card charges and other debts run up by identity thieves. This financial nightmare for consumers also may have grave national security consequences for our country, if terrorists are attempting to hack into databases to capture personal information about U.S. citizens and government personnel and private financial information that they could then use to help plan or fund their deadly attacks," Rep. Markey said. "Today, I wrote to Secretary Chertoff and Director Mueller to request that DHS and the FBI investigate connections between the wave of identity thefts and terrorist activities, and I look forward to their responses," Rep. Markey added.

Robert O'Harrow, *Washington Post* writer and author of No Place To Hide writes, "ChoicePoint is no longer merely a background screener. Or a drug tester. Or an insurance fraud specialist. It doesn't just provide dossiers to police across the country or tease out the links among people for intelligence and counterterrorism officials. It does all of that and more. By 2004, it had become perhaps the world's largest private intelligence operation."

In his letter, Rep. Markey asked DHS and the FBI a series of questions, including:

- Whether any of the recent privacy breaches appears particularly problematic, either based on the Department's concern that a breach may be a deliberate attempt to fund terrorist activities through identity theft, or that a breach appears to be an opportunity for terrorists to exploit a breach even if they were not the cause of it.
- Does the Department view the failure of companies to encrypt personal data to be a risk that could have implications for our country's homeland security if the data were stolen by terrorist groups? If yes, would the Department support legislation to require encryption of vital personally identifiable information stored by data brokers, financial information and other commercial entities?
- Does the Department believe that terrorists are unable to purchase information collected by data brokers such as Choicepoint to support their own terrorists activities? If yes, what evidence does the Department have to support this assertion? If not, what are the Department and the Bureau doing to deny terrorists access to such valuable information?
- How many staff members within the Department are responsible for investigation of links between identity thefts and terrorist activities?
- How many identity theft cases between March 1, 2003 and June 1, 2005 have involved stolen information belonging to federal employees, including military personnel? Does the Department believe that a case in which the personal information of federal employees is stolen presents a greater homeland security risk than a case that does not result in the theft of such information?

"We know that Al Qaeda operatives often are well educated and computer savvy. As wire transfers and other avenues for procuring funds are blocked, terrorists may be turning to identity theft to gather the resources they need. If there is a connection here, we need to move aggressively to cut off this valuable information and funding source from reaching terrorists," Rep. Markey concluded.

For more information on Rep. Markey's legislation to address identity theft or for the letters sent to the FBI and DHS go to <http://www.house.gov/markey/>

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